



National Environmental Public Health Tracking User Guide

December 2009

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network User Guide.

Environmental causes of chronic diseases are hard to identify. Measuring amounts of hazardous substances in our environment in a standard way, tracking the spread of these over time and geography, seeing how they show up in human tissues, and understanding how they may cause illness is critical but very difficult to do. The National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network is CDC's effort to combine all of this data into one resource to benefit public health.

The National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network is a system of integrated health, exposure, and hazard information and data from a variety of national, state, and city sources. On the Tracking Network, you can explore information and view maps, tables, and charts about health and the environment across the country.

The chapters in this manual are:

- **Becoming Familiar with the Tracking Network Public Portal**

A guide through the main topics of the Public Portal.

- **Navigating and Using the Tracking Network Public Portal**

Lessons in navigating the Public Portal—how to find information and documentation, and how to display data.

- **The Tracking Network Secure Portal**

An introduction to the secure portal—what it contains, and how to access it.

- **Frequently Asked Questions**

A list of questions users most often ask.

If you have technical questions about the Tracking Network contact us at 1-877-923-8722 or email us at trackingsupport@cdc.gov.

2. Becoming Familiar with the Tracking Network Public Portal

This chapter focuses on becoming familiar with portal content through the navigation toolbars and the three interactive areas featured on the home page: *Environments*, *Health Effects*, and *Info by Location*. Figure 1 below is the Tracking Network Public Portal home page which is located at www.cdc.gov/ephtracking/.

2.1 Environments

From the home page, the *Environments* tab provides access to the environmental health topics included in the Tracking Network.

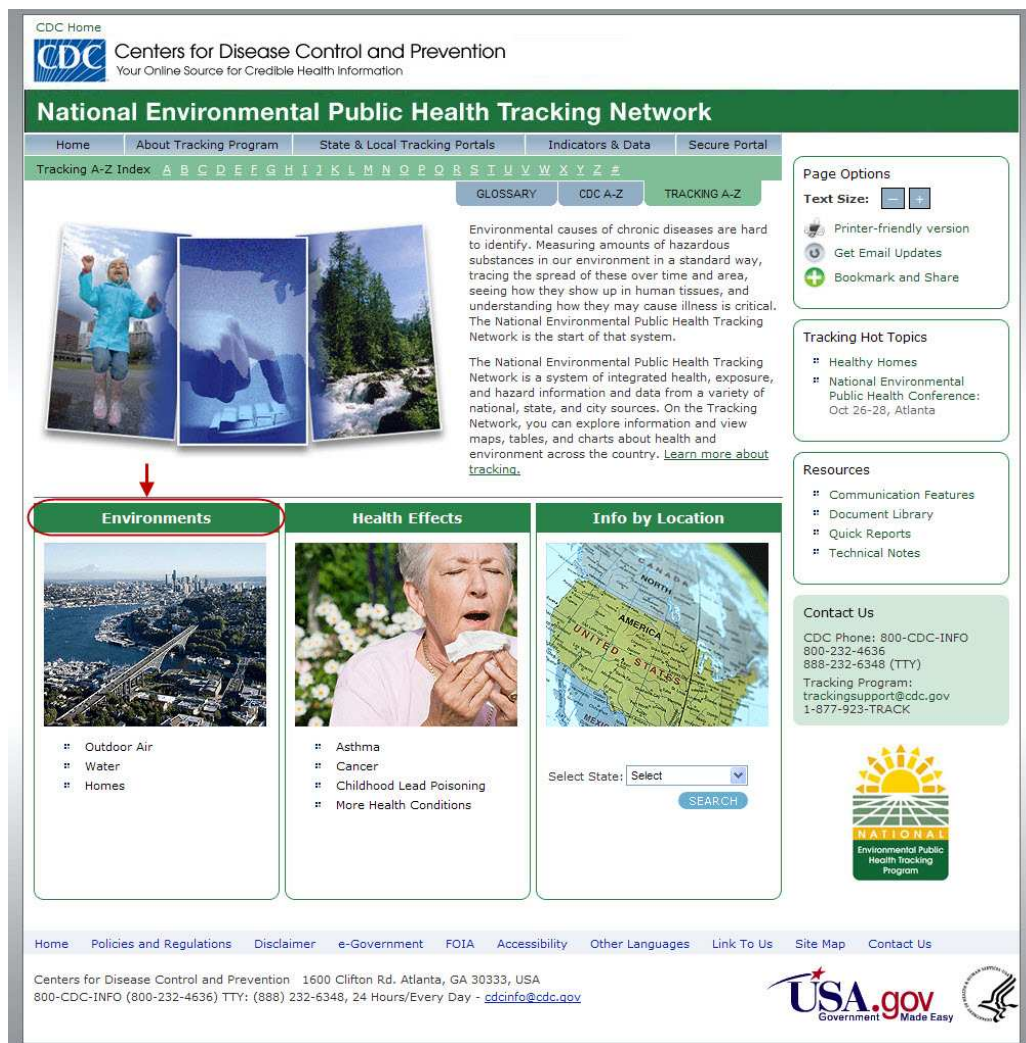


Figure 1. Tracking Network Public Portal Home Page

From the Environments screen, select any of the main headings—*Homes*, *Outdoor Air*, or *Water*. (Figure 2)

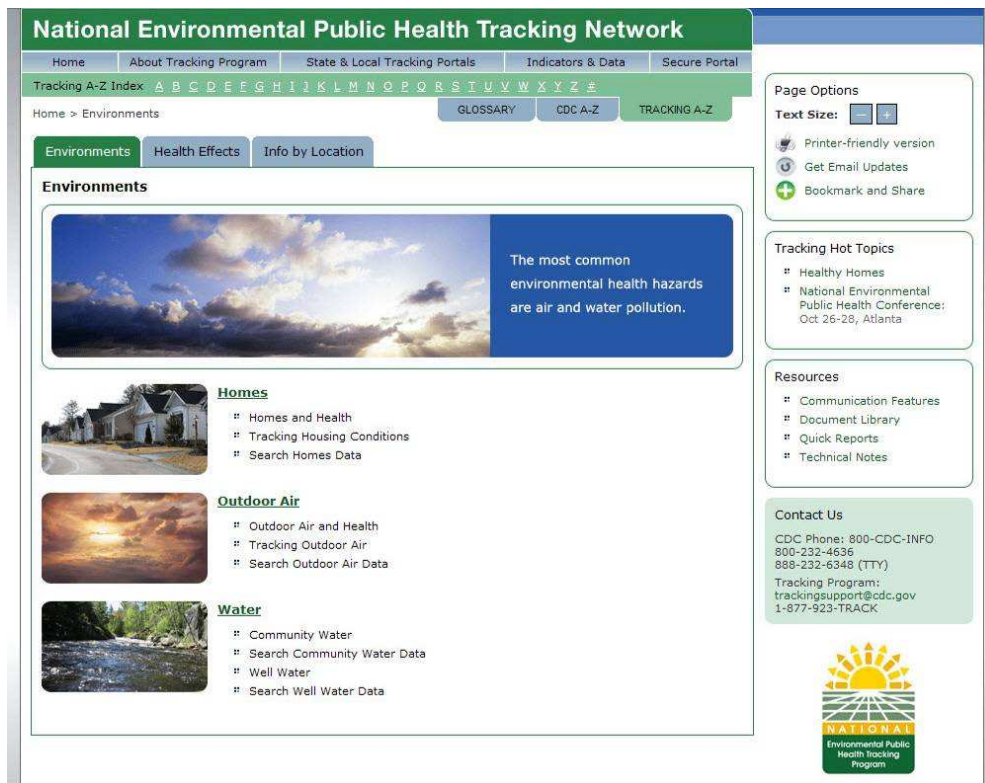


Figure 2. Options Available from the *Environments* screen

As an example, click on the first main heading, *Homes*.



From this page you can:

1. Learn about the two major health effects associated with housing:
childhood lead poisoning and carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.
2. Read how public health information is collected about lead and CO
exposures in the home.
3. Learn about contaminants in the home. At this time the Tracking Network
contains information about lead and CO.
4. Learn about how the Tracking Network uses childhood lead poisoning and
carbon monoxide data.
5. View related resource links.
6. Read about the *Blood Lead Testing and Housing Age* indicator.
7. Go directly to the *Data Query and Results* page.

See Figure 3 below.

See Section 3.2 for the Data Query and Results page example and steps.

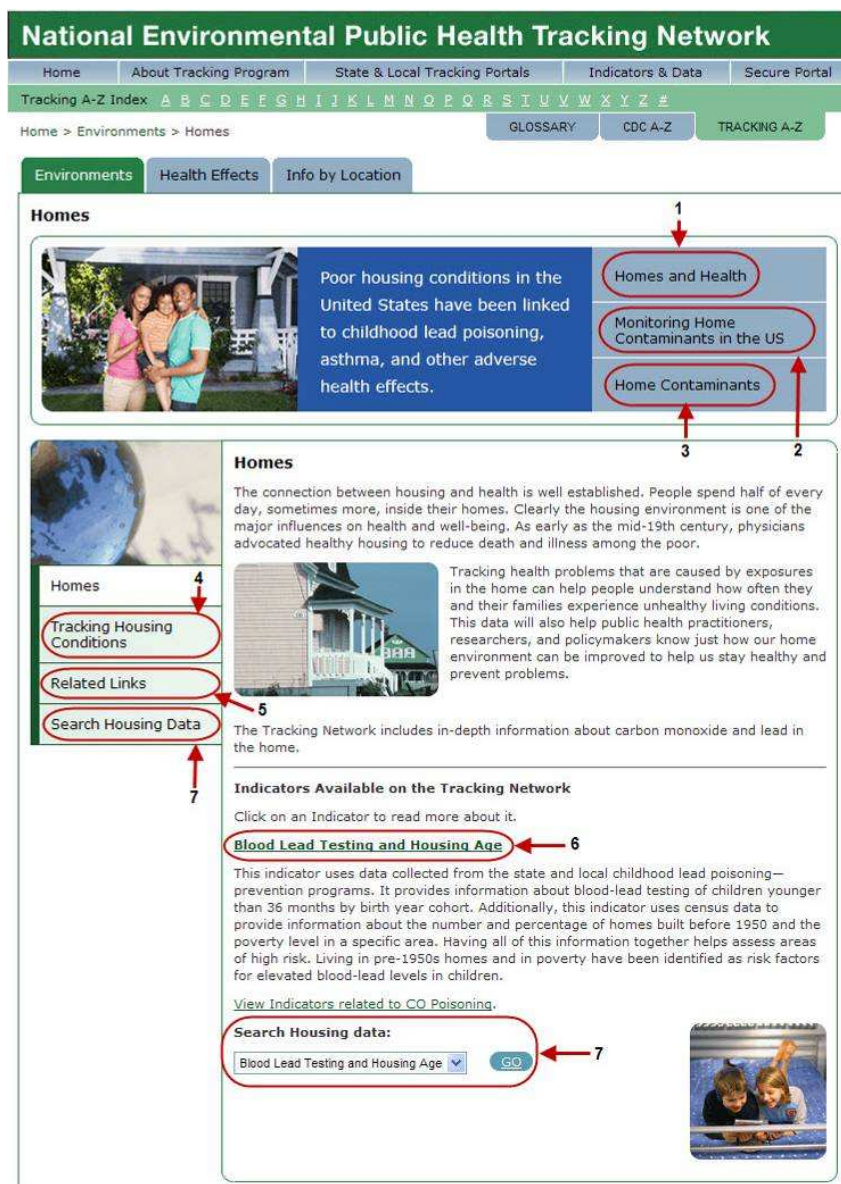


Figure 3. The *Homes* option from the *Environments* screen

In each area you will find more specific information, related links, and a way to search for data for that topic. The other Environments pages (*Outdoor Air* and *Water*) will have a similar layout.

You can access some of these sections quickly from the Environments home page as well. The first *Homes* subheading is *Homes and Health*.



Homes

- ⌘ [Homes and Health](#) ←
- ⌘ [Tracking Housing Conditions](#)
- ⌘ [Search Homes Data](#)

This link opens a page that details two major health issues associated with exposures in the home—childhood lead poisoning and CO poisoning. To learn more, click on the links for each condition. (Figure 4)

Home

About Tracking Program

State & Local Tracking Portals

Indicators & Data

Secure Portal

Tracking A-Z Index

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z #

Home > Environments > Homes

GLOSSARY

CDC A-Z

TRACKING A-Z

Environments

Health Effects

Info by Location

Homes

Poor housing conditions in the United States have been linked to childhood lead poisoning, asthma, and other adverse health effects.

Homes and Health

Monitoring Home Contaminants in the US

Home Contaminants

Homes

Tracking Housing Conditions

Related Links

Search Housing Data

Homes and Health

The connection between housing and health is well established. People spend half of every day, sometimes more, inside their homes. Clearly, the housing environment is one of the major influences on health and well-being. As early as the mid-19th century, physicians advocated healthy housing to reduce death and illness among the poor.

Many modern housing and building codes can be traced to the public health responses to epidemics that occurred with the rapid industrialization and urbanization in Western countries a hundred years ago. In the mid-20th century, however, housing and health agencies became separated organizationally, which resulted in less focus on preventing housing-related disease and illness.

Recently, the public health community renewed its interest in promoting healthy housing. Several research studies have shown improved health outcomes from policies that targeted living conditions, especially housing.

CDC provides data on the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (EPHTN) to better understand how housing conditions affect health. On this website, information is available about two major health effects associated with housing: childhood lead poisoning and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Childhood Lead Poisoning

Between 1999 and 2004, an estimated 240,000 children 105 years of age had elevated blood-lead levels, and most of these levels were caused by lead paint-hazards in and around their homes. Lead exposure causes lasting damage to a child's neurodevelopment and behavior problems. In fact, in high amounts lead can be deadly. Although it is no longer used, lead-based paint poisoned millions of children.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is one of the leading causes of unintentional poisoning deaths in the United States. CO is a colorless, odorless gas that is given off whenever fuel or other materials are burned. Between 2001 and 2003, more than 15,000 Americans were treated in hospital emergency departments for non-fire-related CO exposure; 64% of these exposures occurred in the home. CO poisoning can cause shortness of breath, neurobehavioral effects, and even death. Low-level CO exposure may cause irregular heartbeat and damage to the heart muscle.

Figure 4. The *Homes and Health* Subheading

For Release 1.3

page 7

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From the Environments home page, the second subheading is *Tracking Housing Conditions*.



From here you can learn about childhood lead and CO poisoning surveillance and access a link to CDC's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. (Figure 5)

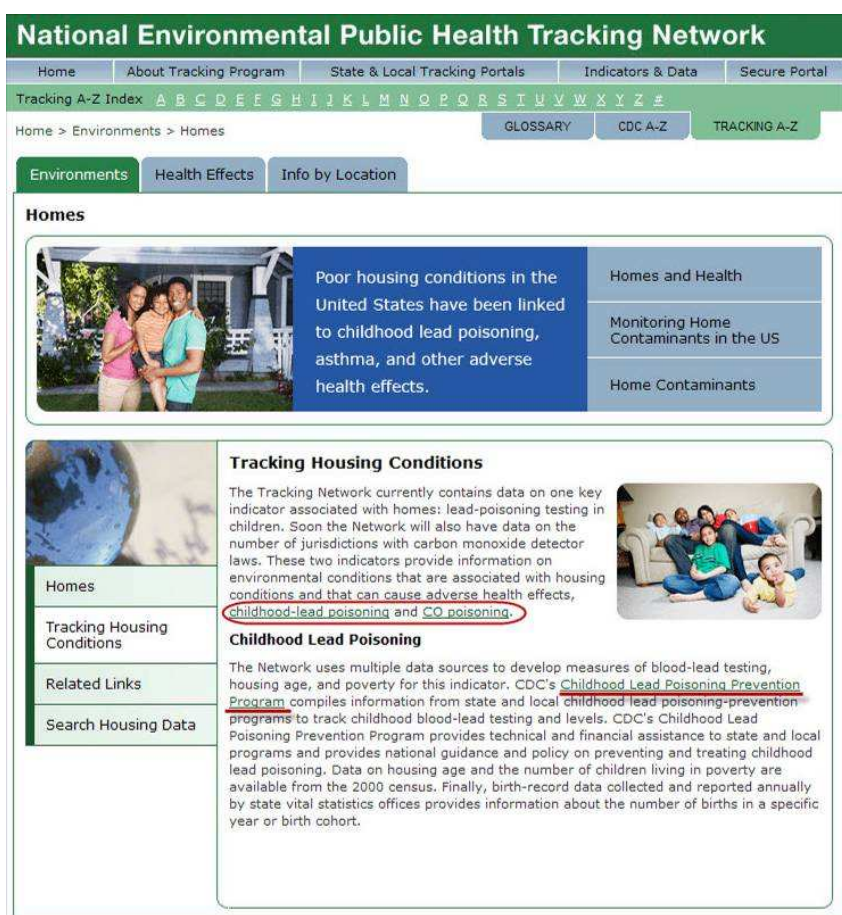


Figure 5. The *Tracking Housing Conditions* Subheading

From the Environments home page, the final subheading is *Search Homes Data*, which will take you directly to the *Data Query and Results* page.



Homes

- # Homes and Health
- # Tracking Housing Conditions
- # Search Homes Data



See Section 3.2 for the Data Query and Results page example and steps.

2.2 Health Effects

To reach *Health Effects*, click on the Health Effects tab or return to the home page. (Figure 6)

Once you are back on the home page, you will see an option to navigate to the health effects information included in the Tracking Network.

Figure 6. The Tracking Network Home Page

Selecting from the main headings will lead to specific information about that topic, related resource links, and data searches. If you choose the Health Effects link you will come to the Health Effects landing page. (Figure 7)

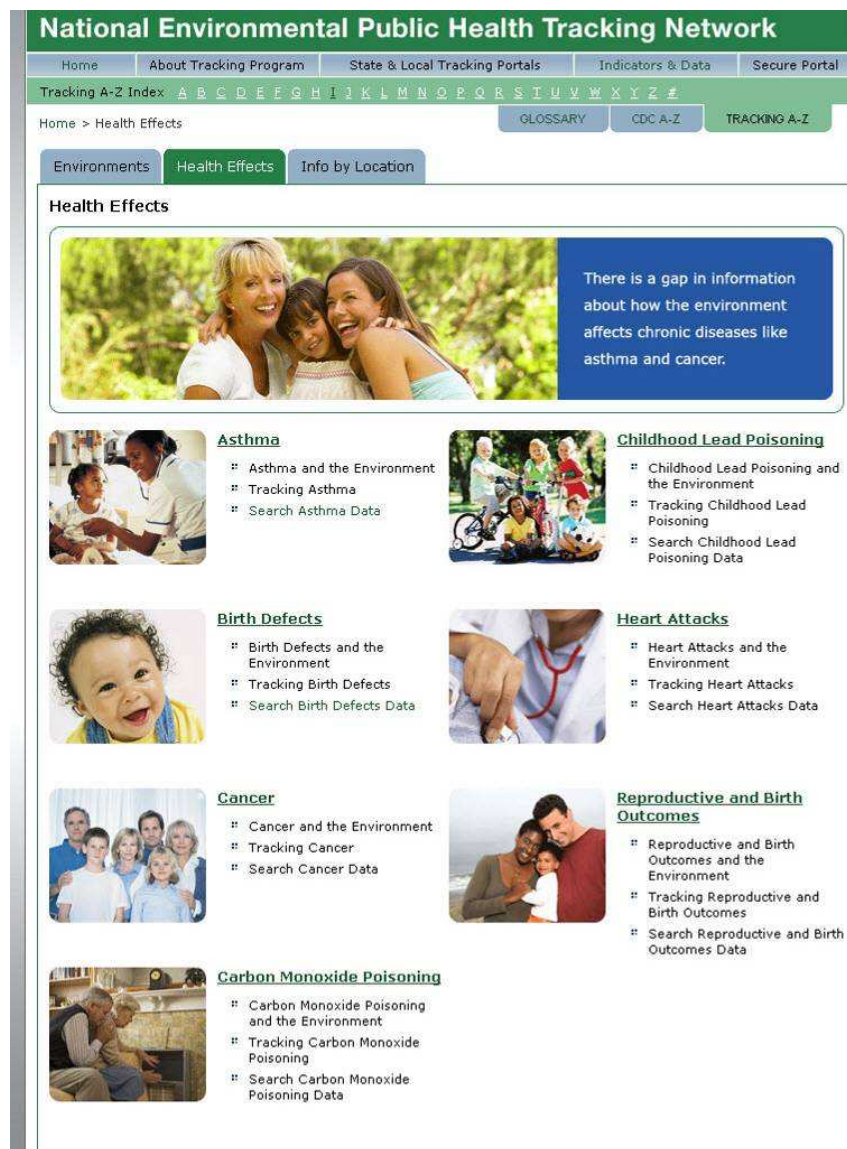


Figure 7. The *Health Effects* landing page

These subheadings show how we track each health effect and explain what we know about ways in which the environment and other factors may influence it. The last subheading for each area will take you directly to the data query and results page.

For example, selecting the *Heart Attacks* main heading will take you to a page that begins to explain why heart attack information is part of the Tracking Network.



From the Heart Attacks main page you can:

1. Learn about the role the environment plays in heart attacks.
2. Learn about exposure and risk factors associated with heart attacks.
3. Learn about preventing and reducing risks for heart attacks.
4. Learn how the Tracking Network uses heart attack surveillance data.
5. View more resource links related to heart attacks.
6. View the Hospitalizations for Heart Attack indicator data.
7. Search heart attack data through the data query and results page.

See Figure 8 below.

See Section 3.2 for the Data Query and Results page example and steps.

National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network

Home | About Tracking Program | State & Local Tracking Portals | Indicators & Data | Secure Portal

Tracking A-Z Index: A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z #

Home > Health Effects > Heart Attacks

GLOSSARY | CDC A-Z | TRACKING A-Z

Environments | **Health Effects** | Info by Location

Heart Attacks



Each year, about 1.2 million persons in the United States are expected to have a new or recurrent heart attack.

Heart Attacks and the Environment

Exposure and Risk

Prevention

3 2 1



Heart Attacks

Tracking Heart Attacks 4

Related Links 5

Search Heart Attack Data 7



A heart attack is also called a myocardial infarction. As of 2007, about 7.9 million Americans age 20 and older have survived a heart attack, according to the American Heart Association.

Heart Attacks Indicators Available on the Tracking Network

Click on an indicator to read more about it.

Hospitalizations for Heart Attack 6

This indicator uses data collected by hospitals. It can be used to identify trends and patterns in the occurrence of heart attacks across time and space. The data are organized by different variables to help estimate the number of hospital admissions for heart attacks in different time periods, age groups, and geographic areas, such as states and counties. Hospitalization data for heart attacks omit individuals who do not receive medical care or who are not hospitalized, including those people who die in emergency rooms, in nursing homes, or at home without being admitted to a hospital, and people treated in outpatient settings. Differences in rates by time or area may reflect differences or changes in diagnostic techniques and criteria, in the coding of heart attacks, or in medical care access.

Search Heart Attack data:

Hospitalizations for Heart Attack

GO 7




Figure 8. *Heart Attacks* from the *Health Effects* screen

Back on the *Health Effects* main page, the first subheading is *Heart Attacks and the Environment*.



Heart Attacks

- " Heart Attacks and the Environment
- " Tracking Heart Attacks
- " Search Heart Attacks Data

This option will take you to a page describing what we know about the role the environment plays in heart attacks. (Figure 9) On this page you can:

1. Read about heart attacks and the environment.
2. Mouse over the green hyperlinks and click to read definitions about important highlighted words.

National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network

Home About Tracking Program State & Local Tracking Portals Indicators & Data Secure Portal

Tracking A-Z Index A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z #

Home > Health Effects > Heart Attacks

GLOSSARY CDC A-Z TRACKING A-Z

Environments **Health Effects** Info by Location

Heart Attacks

Each year, about 1.2 million persons in the United States are expected to have a new or recurrent heart attack.

Heart Attacks and the Environment
Exposure and Risk
Prevention

Heart Attacks and the Environment

According to the American Heart Association, "studies have demonstrated a consistent risk for cardiovascular events in relation to both short- and long-term exposure to present-day concentrations of ambient particulate matter."

Increasingly, investigators both in the United States and abroad have shown relationships between exposure to short and long term exposure to particulate air pollution and the increased risk of myocardial infarction, referred to as heart attack, and other forms of coronary heart disease. A number of studies have reported associations between air pollution and hospitalizations for heart attacks and other forms of heart disease. For example, researchers have demonstrated increases in heart attack hospitalization rates in relation to fine particles (PM_{2.5}), particularly in sensitive groups, such as the elderly, patients with pre-existing heart disease, survivors of heart attack, or people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Heart Attacks
Tracking Heart Attacks
Related Links
Search Heart Attack Data

Figure 9. Heart Attacks and the Environment from the Health Effects screen.

From the Health Effects main page, the next subheading is *Tracking Heart Attacks*.

Heart Attacks

- Heart Attacks and the Environment
- Tracking Heart Attacks**
- Search Heart Attacks Data

This will take you to a page that describes how the Tracking Network uses heart attack surveillance data. (Figure 10)

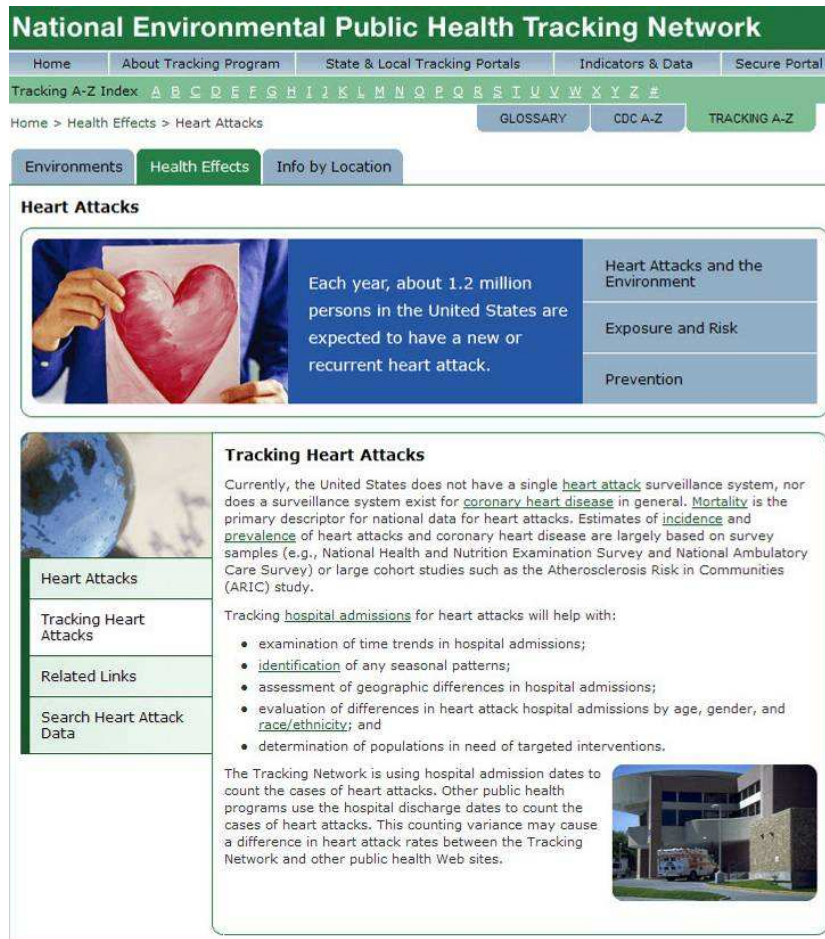


Figure 10. Tracking Heart Attacks page from the Health Effects screen.

From the Health Effects main page, the last subheading is *Search Heart Attacks Data*.



This link will take you directly to the Data Query and Results page.

See Section 3.2 for the Data Query and Results page example and steps.

2.3 Info by Location

From the home page, the *Info by Location* section will allow you to search available data by state. (Figure 11)

The screenshot shows the CDC National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network home page. At the top is the CDC logo and the text "Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Your Online Source for Credible Health Information". Below this is a green banner with the title "National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network". A navigation bar includes links for Home, About Tracking Program, State & Local Tracking Portals, Indicators & Data, and Secure Portal. A secondary navigation bar lists "Tracking A-Z Index" followed by letters A through Z, and a "TRACKING A-Z" button. Below the navigation is a section with three images (a child in a raincoat, a map, and a forest) and text explaining the network's purpose: "Environmental causes of chronic diseases are hard to identify. Measuring amounts of hazardous substances in our environment in a standard way, tracing the spread of these over time and area, seeing how they show up in human tissues, and understanding how they may cause illness is critical. The National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network is the start of that system." It also states: "The National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network is a system of integrated health, exposure, and hazard information and data from a variety of national, state, and city sources. On the Tracking Network, you can explore information and view maps, tables, and charts about health and environment across the country. [Learn more about tracking.](#)" A red arrow points from this text to the "Info by Location" section. This section is highlighted with a red border and contains a map of the United States, a "Select State:" dropdown menu, and a "SEARCH" button. To the left of "Info by Location" are two other sections: "Environments" (with a cityscape image and links for Outdoor Air, Water, and Homes) and "Health Effects" (with an image of an elderly woman coughing and links for Asthma, Cancer, Childhood Lead Poisoning, and More Health Conditions). On the right side of the page, there are several boxes: "Page Options" (Text Size, Printer-friendly version, Get Email Updates, Bookmark and Share), "Tracking Hot Topics" (Healthy Homes, National Environmental Public Health Conference: Oct 26-28, Atlanta), "Resources" (Communication Features, Document Library, Quick Reports, Technical Notes), and "Contact Us" (CDC Phone: 800-CDC-INFO, 800-232-4636, 888-232-6348 (TTY); Tracking Program: trackingsupport@cdc.gov, 1-877-923-TRACK). At the bottom, there is a footer with links for Home, Policies and Regulations, Disclaimer, e-Government, FOIA, Accessibility, Other Languages, Link To Us, Site Map, and Contact Us. It also includes the CDC address: "Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 1600 Clifton Rd. Atlanta, GA 30333, USA 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) TTY: (888) 232-6348, 24 Hours/Every Day - cdcinfo@cdc.gov". The footer also features the "USA.gov" logo with the tagline "Government Made Easy" and the "National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program" logo.

Figure 11. *Info by Location* on the home page

Choosing the *Info by Location* tab opens a map of the United States. You can then select criteria for a state specific search. (Figure 12)

Step 1 - Choose a state.

Step 2 - Select a content area, indicator, and measure. Click the *GO* button to be taken to the *Data query and Results* page.

Environments Health Effects Info by Location

Query and Results

Step 1: Selected State is New Mexico.

Step 2: Select your content area.

Content Area:
Homes

Select Indicator:
Blood Lead Testing and Housing Age

Select Measure:
Number of houses built from 1950 and 1979

GO

Figure 12. *Info by location* map

2.3.1 Content Areas, Indicators, and Measures

The drop down menus under **Step 2: Select your content area** are dynamic. (Figure 12) This means your *Indicator* and *Measure* selections will adjust based on the content area selection you start with, proceeding from more general categories to more specific categories.

Content Area (the starting point for data categorization in the Tracking Network) is the general health effect or environmental area about which you want more information. In the above example, *Homes* is selected as the content area. (Figure 12) From that selection the next drop down menu displays only *Indicators* pertaining to *Homes*.

Indicators are available within each content area. For Tracking, an indicator is one or more items, characteristics or other things that will be assessed and that provide information about a population's health status, their environment, and other factors with the goal of allowing us to monitor trends, compare situations, and better understand the link between environment and health. It is assessed through the use of direct and indirect measures (e.g. levels of a pollutant in the environment as a measure of possible exposure) that describe health or a factor associated with health (i.e., environmental hazard, age) in a specified population. In the example above, the available indicator for the content area Homes is "Blood Lead Testing and Housing Age."

Measures are available for each indicator. On the Tracking Network, a measure is a summary characteristic or statistic, such as a sum, percentage, or rate. In the above example, an available measure for the content area Homes is "Number of Houses Built from 1950 to 1979."

Section 3.1.3 is dedicated to helping you navigate through the Info by Location feature.

See Section 3.2 for the Data Query and Results page example and steps.

2.4 Toolbars

Toolbars appear at the top and bottom of the Tracking Portal home page. Here is an example of the top toolbar: (Figure 13)

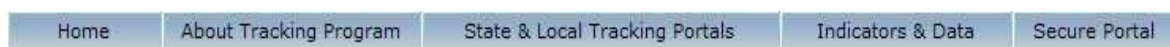


Figure 13. *Tracking home page top toolbar*

Home

Clicking the Home tab from anywhere in the portal will return you to the Tracking Network home page.

About Tracking Program

This links to background information about the Tracking Program. It provides detailed information about the Program and its underlying concepts.

State and Local Tracking Portals

Here you can access the tracking portals of the 17 state and local health departments that are part of the National Tracking Network. (Figure 14)

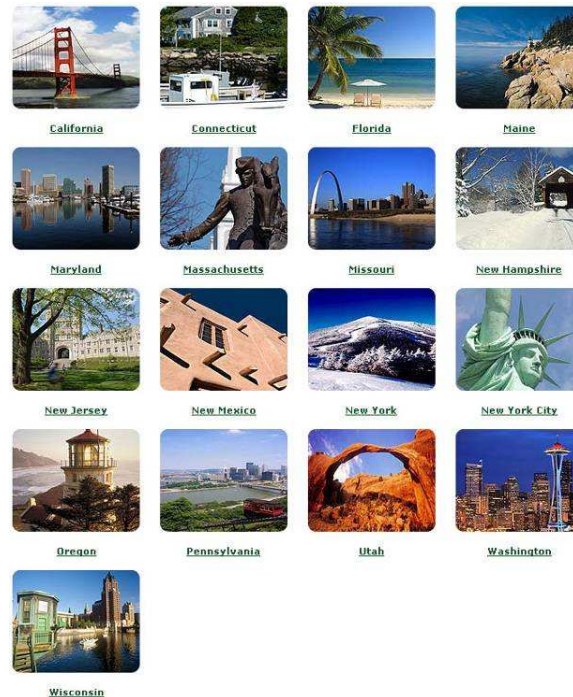


Figure 14. The Tracking Program's 17 participating health departments

Indicators and Data

Here you can search for information on environmental Indicators and metadata.
(Figure 15)

Indicators	Search for Data
<p>An environmental public health indicator provides information about a population's health status with respect to environmental factors. Tracking Indicators were developed in collaboration with national, state, and local environmental health partners. Here you can access detailed information about each indicator available on the Tracking Network.</p> <p>View Indicator Definitions and Documentation:</p> <p>Content Area: <input type="text" value="Select Content Area"/> </p> <p>Indicator: <input type="text" value="Select an Indicator"/> </p> <p>GO</p>	<p>Metadata are "data about data". Metadata describe the content, quality, and context of a dataset and provide links to additional information such as quality assurance documents and data dictionaries. The Tracking Network contains metadata records for datasets used to create the Tracking Indicators and for datasets maintained by national, state, and local environmental health partners.</p> <p>Search Data-Indicators and Data:</p> <p>Type in Keywords: <input type="text"/></p> <p>GO</p> <p>Advanced Search</p>

Figure 15. Indicators drop down list and Data search box

Indicators

Indicators are available within each content area. For Tracking, an indicator is one or more items, characteristics or other things that will be assessed and that provide information about a population's health status, their environment, and other factors with the goal of allowing us to monitor trends, compare situations, and better understand the link between environment and health. It is assessed through the use of direct and indirect measures (e.g. levels of a pollutant in the environment as a measure of possible exposure) that describe health or a factor associated with health (i.e., environmental hazard, age) in a specified population. From here, you can select a content area and indicator that will return a chart with:

- indicator type,
- measure information,
- geography,
- time period and scale,
- rationale,
- limitations of the data source, and
- access to the data query and results page.

See Section 3.3, which explains Indicator use.

Search for Data

Generally speaking, metadata are data about data. Metadata describe the content, quality, and context of a dataset and provide links to additional information such as quality assurance documents and data dictionaries. From here you can search for and view the detailed metadata reports available on the Tracking Network Public Portal.

See Section 3.4, Search and View Metadata.

Secure Portal

The last option on the top menu is the Tracking Network's Secure Portal. This is a separate Web-based system that provides access to resources for environmental and public health practitioners and researchers. To gain access you must register, have an appropriate professional need, and a digital certificate from CDC's Secure Data Networks. The secure portal employs rigorous security measures to protect potentially private and confidential health information.

See Chapter 4.0 for detailed information about the Secure Portal.

The toolbar at the bottom of the screen is designed to help you find general information about CDC. (Figure 16)

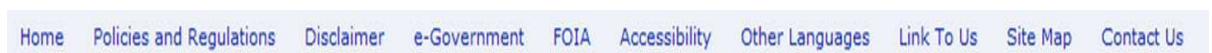


Figure 16. Tracking home page bottom toolbar

3. Navigating and Using the Tracking Network Public Portal

You should now be familiar with the three interactive areas on the home page: *Environments*, *Health Effects*, and *Info by Location*. These interactive areas provide information to help you understand the topics available on the Tracking Network and introduce you to ideas that put in context the data you will access.

3.1 Getting to Data through the Home Page Interactive Areas

3.1.1 Environments

Step 1. From the home page, click the *Environments* link. (Figure 17)



Figure 17. The Environments link from the home page

Step 2. Go directly to the *Data Query and Results* page by choosing either one of the following: (Figure 18)

- Search Homes Data,
- Search Outdoor Air Data,
- Search Community Water Data, or
- Search Well Water Data.

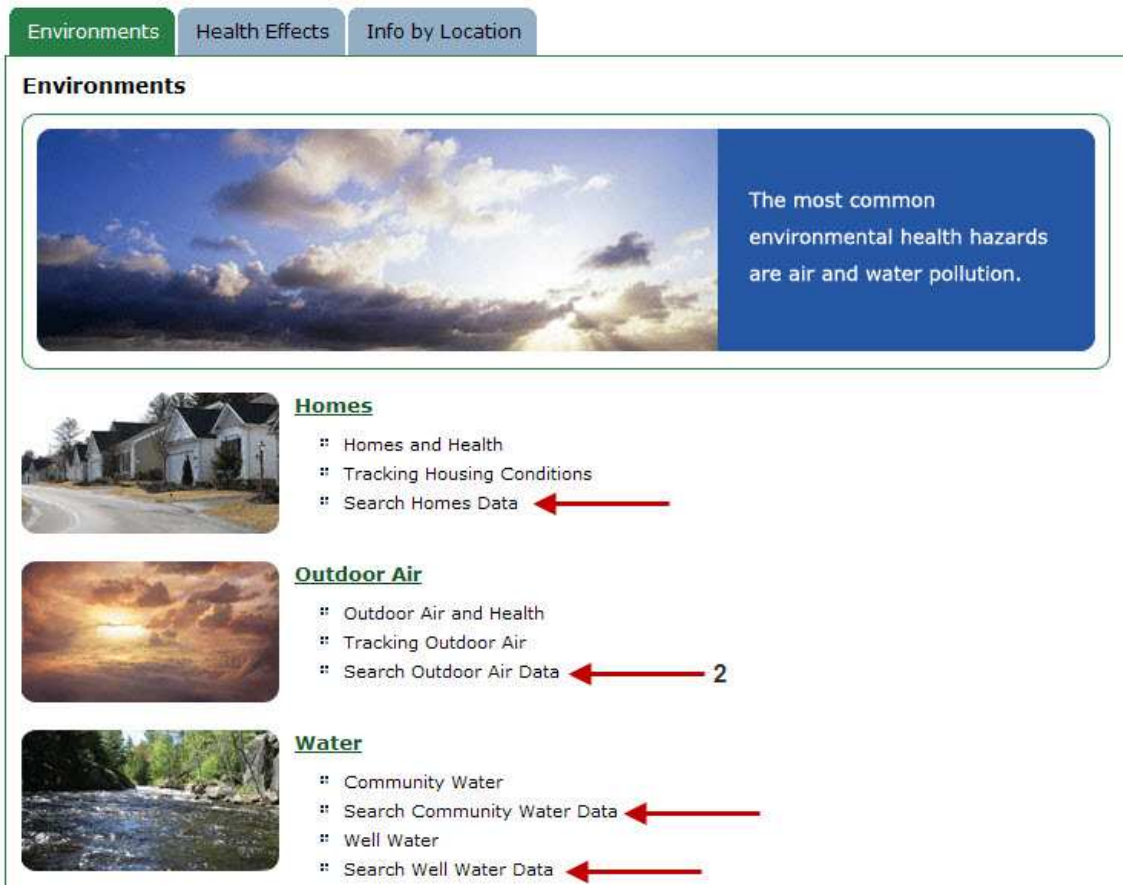


Figure 18. The data search options from the *Environments* page

See Section 3.2 for the Data Query and Results page example and steps.

3.1.2 Health Effects

Step 1. From the home page, click the Health Effects link or the Health Effects tab.
(Figure 19)



Figure 19. The *Health Effects* link from the home page

Step 2. Go directly to the data query and results page by choosing the search options under any topic:

- Search Asthma Data,
- Search Cancer Data,
- Search Carbon Monoxide Data,
- Search Childhood Lead Poisoning Data,
- Search Heart Attack Data



Asthma

- Asthma and the Environment
- Tracking Asthma
- Search Asthma Data

2

See Section 3.2 for the Data Query and Results page example and steps.

3.1.3 Info by Location

Step 1. From the home page click on the Info by Location tab to open a United States map or choose a state from the drop down box and click **Search**. (Figure 20)



Figure 20. Info by Location link from the home page

Step 2. Verify your selected state at the top of the page then select your content area, indicator, and measure. (Figure 21)

Step 3. Click **GO** to be taken directly to the Data Query and Results page.

See Section 3.2 for the Data Query and Results page example and steps.

National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network

Home

About Tracking Program

State & Local Tracking Portals

Indicators & Data

Secure Portal

Tracking A-Z Index

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

N

O

P

Q

R

S

T

U

V

W

X

Y

Z

#

Home > Info By Location

GLOSSARY

CDC A-Z

TRACKING A-Z

Environments

Health Effects

Info by Location

Query and Results

Step 1: Selected State is New Mexico.

Step 2: Select your content area.

Content Area:

Homes

Select Indicator:

Blood Lead Testing and Housing Age

Select Measure:

Number of houses built from 1950 and 1979

GO

2

2

2

3

Figure 21. Data Query and Results page from the Info by Location link.

3.2 The Data Query and Results Page

See Figure 22 below to view the features of the Data Query and Results page.

National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network

Home | About Tracking Program | State & Local Tracking Portals | Indicators & Data | Secure Portal

Tracking A-Z Index | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z | #

Home > Query and Results

GLOSSARY | CDC A-Z | TRACKING A-Z

Environments | Health Effects | Info by Location

Query and Results

View Data Related To:

Content Area: 1 ↓
Asthma

Indicator: 2 ↓
Hospitalizations for Asthma

Measure: 3 ↓
Age-adjusted rate of hospitalization for asthma p

Location and Time:

Select Indicator first and then Measure to display Geography. Select Geography to display Time Period.

4a → ☒ All Counties ☐ 2000 ☐ 2001 ☐ 2002 ☐ 2003 ☒ 2004 ☒ 2005 5

☐ CALIFORNIA ☐ CONNECTICUT ☐ FLORIDA ☐ MAINE 4 ☐ MARYLAND ☐ MASSACHUSETTS ☐ MISSOURI ☐ NEW HAMPSHIRE ☐ NEW JERSEY ☐ NEW MEXICO

View:

6 → ☐ Apply smoothing to view pattern across counties

Advanced View Options

Gender:

7 → ☐ None ☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE

8

QUERY NOTES | **GRAPH VIEW** | **TABLE VIEW** | **MAP VIEW**

9

8a 8b 8c 8d

- To view data for state(s), select state(s) by clicking the box next to the state.
- To view data for county(s), select the state, expand the county list by clicking [+], and then select the counties.
- To view data for all counties within one or more states, select the "all counties" option then select the desired state(s).
- You can only view state data or county data. You cannot view both within the same query. Select only states or only counties per query.
- Available time options will automatically populate based on selected states or counties.
- Use "clear geo" and "clear time" button to clear selections before making another query for the same measure.
- Smoothing is only available when viewing data for all counties in one or more states.
- Click "Advanced View Options" to view data by one of the following groups: gender.
- See "About These Data" below the results panel for important information about the data and measures.
- To obtain data for New York City, select the following counties: Bronx, Kings, New York, Queens, and Richmond.

About These Data

- Data are from state hospital inpatient discharge data repositories provided by state and local Environmental Health Tracking Programs. States without data shown here may have data available through the original data source.
- Records are selected using primary discharge diagnosis and admission date. Only persons admitted to hospital as inpatients are included.
- Discharge records for admissions occurring late in a year may be included in the following year's discharge data set. Completeness for a given year depends on whether data providers had access to the following year's discharge dataset at the time of submitting data to CDC.
- Admissions for persons living within a given state may not be included if hospitalization occurs out of state and notification of the admission is not provided by the state in which it occurs.
- Veterans Affairs, Indian Health Services and institutionalized (prison) populations are not usually included in hospitalization datasets.
- The measures are based on events rather than individuals. Multiple admissions for the same individual and illness episode may be included in the data.
- Differences in rates by time or area may reflect differences or changes in diagnostic techniques and criteria and in the coding of asthma.
- Data presented on this portal may differ from data for the same measure on State Tracking Portals, State Health Department Web sites, and other source Web sites. Differences may occur for a number of reasons such as: use of state-developed population estimates; differences in processes for updating data; or differences in how a measure is defined for environmental public health tracking purposes. Users should consult the indicators and measures descriptions and metadata provided on this site for more information.
- Counts and rates for the State of Maryland may differ from those of other states due to a difference in identifying and excluding transfers between hospitals for the same health event.
- *** Non-zero counts less than 5 and corresponding rates have been suppressed to protect confidentiality.
- Rates or measures with a relative standard error greater than 30% are unstable and have been highlighted in red or suppressed to prevent misinterpretation.
- Rates were age-adjusted by the direct method to the 2000 US Standard population.
- If you chose to view these data smoothed, do not attempt to interpret the results for any single county but instead use data to identify patterns across the state. Smoothing borrows information from neighboring areas to stabilize results from sparsely populated areas. Smoothing is used to reduce variability in the data, allowing patterns to emerge.
- Refer to the indicator documentation available through the "Indicators and Data" tab for more information

Footnotes

Figure 22. The Query and Results page

On the *Query and Results* page multiple data and display options are available. The *Query and Results* page is where you will find detailed data related to all the content areas on the Tracking Network. You can search by single or multiple states, counties, or years. The data will automatically display first in a map, if one is available, but you can choose the graph view or table view tabs to change the view.

The first three steps involve selecting a *Content Area*, *Indicator*, and *Measure*.

Content Area (the starting point for data categorization in the Tracking Network) is the general health effect or environmental area about which you want more information. In the above example, *Asthma* is selected as the *Content Area*. From that selection, the next drop down box displays only *Indicators* pertaining to *Asthma*.

Indicators are available within each content area. For Tracking, an indicator is one or more items, characteristics or other things that will be assessed and that provide information about a population's health status, their environment, and other factors with the goal of allowing us to monitor trends, compare situations, and better understand the link between environment and health. It is assessed through the use of direct and indirect measures (e.g. levels of a pollutant in the environment as a measure of possible exposure) that describe health or a factor associated with health (i.e., environmental hazard, age) in a specified population.

Measures are available for each indicator. On the Tracking Network, a measure is a summary characteristic or statistic, such as a sum, percentage, or rate.

Now, we will step through the Query and Results process. Depending on how you came to this page you may be able to skip steps 1 – 3, they may already be populated.

Step 1. Select a *Content Area* from the drop down box.

Step 2. Select an *Indicator* from the drop down box.

Step 3. Select a *Measure* from the drop down box.

Step 4. Once you have selected your *Content Area*, *Indicator*, and *Measure*, you will only see state and county options for which data were reported to the Tracking Network. If all 50 states have data to view, then all 50 states will populate the selection list.

Step 4a. In addition, some selections will not allow you to query data at the county level. Only if you see a plus sign next to a state, can you expand it to select specific counties. To see data for all counties for a selected state(s) check the *All Counties* box.

Step 5. After you have made your geography selections, select a time period. The years available also vary by the data provided to the Tracking Network. The time options will populate after a geography selection is made.

If you want to change the state, year, or both, click *Clear Geo* or *Clear Time*.

At this point you can skip down to Step 8 and select *RUN QUERY*. If you need to make more selections, continue to Step 6.

Step 6. To see smoothed data, check the box for *Apply smoothing to view pattern across counties*.

Smoothed data is the average of a measure based on the information about that area and the areas around it. Smoothing is only available for some measures and can only be applied at the county level. You must select All Counties to apply smoothing. **If you choose to view these data smoothed, do not attempt to interpret the results for any single county, but instead, use the data to identify patterns across the state.**

Smoothing borrows information from neighboring areas to stabilize results from

sparsely populated areas. Smoothing is used to reduce variability in the data, allowing patterns to emerge.

Step 7. Click the plus (+) sign to expand *Advanced View Options*. The advanced view contains additional filters that may include Ethnicity, Gender, Race, and Age Group.

Step 8. Click *Run Query* to run the query and view the results.

As the screen reloads you will see this agreement: (Figure 23)

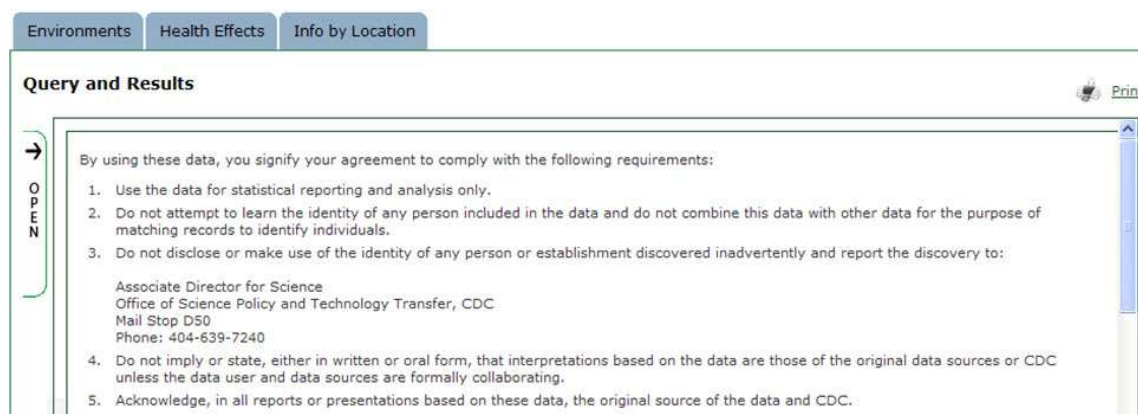


Figure 23. Data Query and Results page use agreement.

The results panel will populate and you will see four tabs. Three of them let you view the results in graph, table, or map format. The default for every query is a map even if a map is not available for your query selections. See Step 8d for more details about maps. The fourth tab is for Query Notes. (Figure 24)

Step 8a. Select *Query Notes* for additional information regarding your query choices. *Query Notes* will tell you those states for which data are available, whether smoothing is available, which advanced view options are available, and, if applicable, options for selecting counties.

Query notes will change based on the measure you have chosen. Remember that the purpose of Query notes is to assist you in constructing a query that will return appropriate data.

The footnotes below the results pane (About These Data) describe the data you are about to view. Footnotes are associated with the results you receive and are based on the categories you have chosen. They provide information about the measure's source, quality, and general characteristics.

Step 8b. From the tabs, select *Graph View* to view results graphically. Click on the *Print* icon to view the graph in a printer-friendly format. (Figure 24)

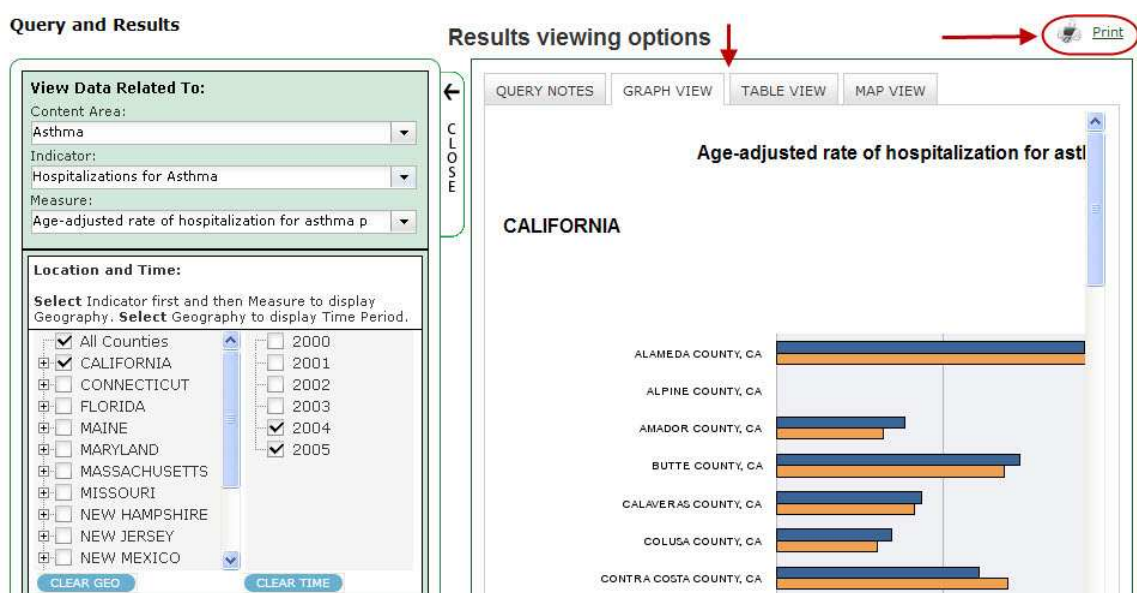


Figure 24. The Data Query and Results graph view and Print command

Step 8c. Select Table View to view results in a table. (Figure 25)

When viewing tables you may see red asterisk (***) symbols and color coding. The *** symbols means the value is a non-zero count less than 6 and corresponding rates have been suppressed (hidden from view) to protect confidentiality.

Numbers highlighted in red are rates or measures with a relative standard error greater than 30%, are unstable (created based on a small number), and have been highlighted or suppressed to prevent misinterpretation.

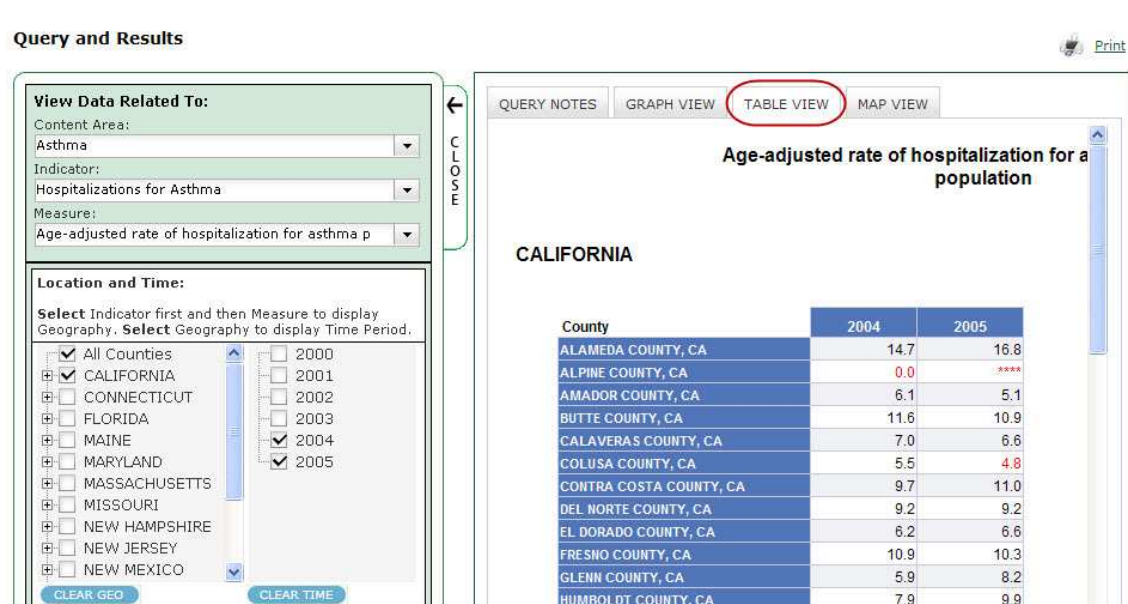


Figure 25. The Data Query and Results table view

Step 8d. Select *Map View* to view results in a map. If the data are insufficient or not appropriate for generating a map, you will see a message that may look like this:

A map could not be generated for the criteria searched.
 This could be because of

- Invalid geography selection or
- Unavailability of enough data to generate a map.

Title: Age-adjusted Rate of Asthma Hospitalizations
Geographic Resolution:
Time Resolution: All Years*
 Please try a different search criteria using the query panel.

Figure 26. Insufficient data for map message

If you see this message, look at the Query Notes to help you make a new selection.
 If there is sufficient data a map view will display.

If you select multiple states, the system will return all states for which map data are available, but only those states you selected will appear on your tables and graphs. This also applies to counties within the states.

Step 9. For more screen width when viewing query results, click the *Close* tab to hide the query criteria panel. (Figure 27)

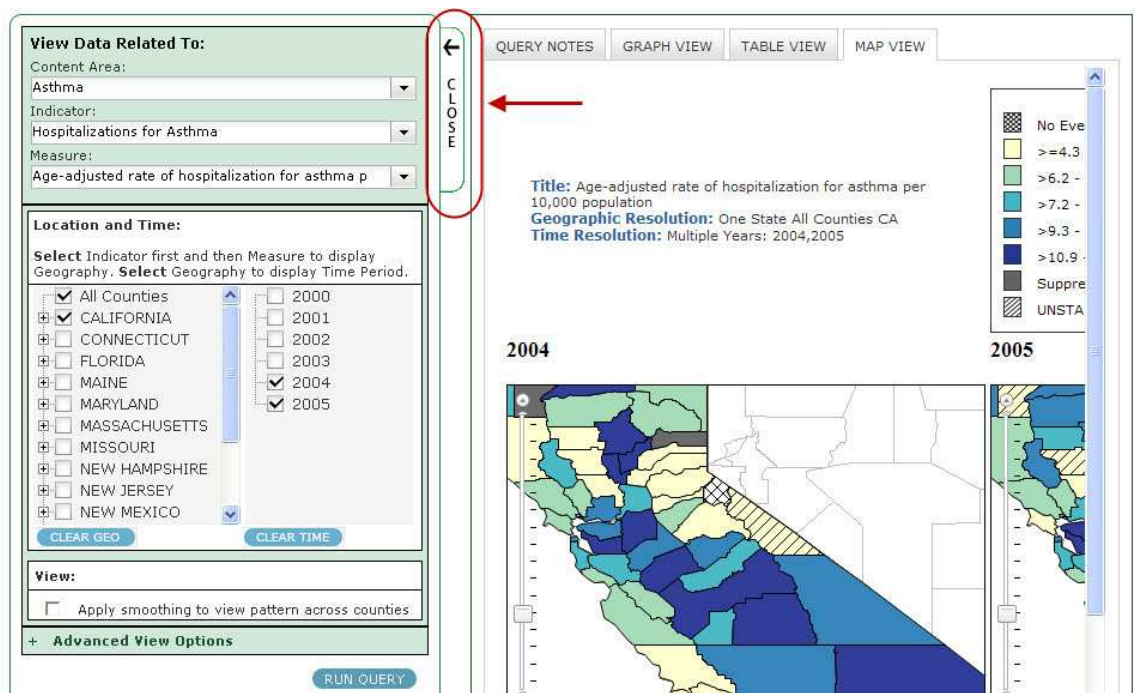


Figure 27. The Data Query and Results map view

3.3 Query Indicators

From the home page:

Step 1. Click the *Indicators & Data* tab in the top menu bar.



Step 2. From the drop down lists on the *Indicators* screen, select a *Content Area* and an *Indicator*. (Figure 28)

Step 3. Click *Go*.

Figure 28. Indicator Definitions and Documentation lookup screen

A chart will appear that lists the indicator type, Tracking related measures, geography, time, rationale for choosing this measure for the Tracking Network, use of and limitations on the measures' data source. (Figure 29)

Figure 29. Indicator screen from the home page *Query Indicators & Data* tab

From this screen you can modify your selections or click on *View Maps, Tables and Charts* to go directly to the Data Query and Results page.

See Section 3.2 for the Data Query and Results page example and steps.

3.4 Search and View Metadata

From the home page:

Step 1. Click the *Indicators & Data* tab



Under the **Search for Data** section, you will find a keyword search.

Step 2. Enter a keyword and click *GO* to perform a general metadata search.

(Figure 30)

Note: Only keywords found in the metadata records will return a result.

A screenshot of the 'Search for Data' section. The title 'Search for Data' is in a green header. Below the header is a paragraph of text explaining metadata. Below the text is a section titled 'Search Data-Indicators and Data:'. Inside this section is a text input field with the word 'asthma' entered. To the right of the input field is a blue 'GO' button. Below the input field and button is a link labeled 'Advanced Search'. A red circle and arrow labeled '2' point to the search area.

Figure 30. Data-Indicators and Data search area

The system returns a results page that displays all the metadata records that include your keyword. The description also includes the dataset title, abstract, and time period information. (Figure 31)

The screenshot shows the 'Tracking A-Z Index' navigation bar at the top with links A through Z and a search bar. Below the navigation bar, the breadcrumb trail reads 'Home > Indicators & Data > Search Results'. There are three tabs: 'GLOSSARY', 'CDC A-Z', and 'TRACKING A-Z', with 'TRACKING A-Z' being the active tab. The page is titled 'Metadata Summary' and shows a 'Keyword Search: asthma'. To the right, under 'Search Data-Indicators and Data:', there is a text input field with 'asthma' and a 'GO' button. Below the search bar, it says 'Results found: 2 of 2'. The first result is titled 'Utah hospitalized asthma and myocardial infarction counts by county, year and month of admission, 5-year age group and sex.' The description states: 'This data set contains annual case counts for inpatient hospitalized asthma (ICD9-CM 493.0-493.9) and myocardial infarction (ICD9-CM 410) as the primary diagnosis occurring among Utah residents from 1993 through 2006. This data has been aggregated by county, year and month of admission, five-year age groups and sex. The asthma data was obtained from the Utah Hospitalization Discharge Database maintained by the Office of Health Care Statistics of the Utah Department of Health. The data was aggregated by the Utah Environmental Public Health Tracking Network.' The 'Data Time Period' is listed as '19920101 - 20061231'. Below the description, there are two buttons: 'View Full Metadata' and 'Query Data', both of which are circled in red with arrows pointing to them. To the right of the 'Query Data' button is an 'Advanced Search' link, also circled in red. The second result is titled 'Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) asthma and myocardial infarction inpatient hospitalizations'. The description states: 'This inpatient hospitalization dataset was purchased from the Saint Paul Computer Center, Glen Burnie, MD, a HSCRC subcontractor. Maryland health code requires all hospitals to report quarterly on treated inpatients. As the name implies, the Maryland Legislature established the HSCRC in 1971 to monitor and control medical care costs, http://www.hscrc.state.md.us/. In addition to costs for different medical procedures, this dataset includes demographic information on age, sex, race, residential zip code, admission and discharge dates, residential zip code and ICD-9-CM codes for asthma and myocardial infarction (MI). Data are available for 2000 through 2006.'

Figure 31. Metadata Summary

These results are short descriptions of the available metadata records. You can choose to view the full metadata report, which contains a complete description of the data according to the Tracking Network metadata standard. You can also choose the *Query Data* option, which will take you directly to the *Data Query and Results* page.

See Section 3.2 for the Data Query and Results page example and steps.

For a more specific metadata view, perform an *Advanced Search*.

Note the *Advanced Search* option in the *Search for Data* section of the *Indicators & Data* main page. This option will allow you to refine your search further. (Figure 32)

Search for Data

Metadata are "data about data". Metadata describe the content, quality, and context of a dataset and provide links to additional information such as quality assurance documents and data dictionaries. The Tracking Network contains metadata records for datasets used to create the Tracking Indicators and for datasets maintained by national, state, and local environmental health partners.

Search Data-Indicators and Data:

Type in Keywords:

[GO](#)

[Advanced Search](#)

Figure 32. The *Search for Data* drop down list from the *Advanced Search* option

Select the *Advanced Search Options* to open the search criteria page. (Figure 33)

Step 1. Specify a date range—or choose not to search based on time period.

Step 2. Search for keywords from the categories in the drop down list (e.g., Abstract, Purpose, Location, Keyword, Title). When searching more than one word you must choose an (*AND/OR*) connector.

Step 3. To see the results, click *Search*.

Tracking A-Z Index A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z #

Home > About Tracking Program [GLOSSARY](#) [CDC A-Z](#) [TRACKING A-Z](#)

Advanced Search

Specify Time Period of Content

Specify a date or date range by selecting one of the methods below.

1 ☒ Don't search based on time period

☐ Get data whose date is Before the date

☐ Get data from through

Search in Full-Text(Any) or by Field 2

If you selected search topics earlier, sample search words are provided below to assist in finding data. You may modify these words, the fields that will be searched, or the AND/OR condition between the words.

Search In	Search For	Connector
Select		AND
Select		

3 [SEARCH](#)

Figure 33. The *Advanced Search* screen for Metadata

3.5 Sample Search Scenarios

To conclude the *Navigating and Using the Public Portal* chapter, here are a few sample scenarios.

3.5.1 I want to learn more about arsenic in water.

From the home page

Step 1. Click *Water* under Environments. (Figure 34)



Figure 34. The Environments tab

Step 2. Click *Community Water* or *More Community Water Data and Information*.

(Figure 35)

Water

All of us need clean water to drink. We can go for weeks without food, but only days without water. Contaminated water can be a threat to anyone's health, but especially to young children.

About half of our nation's drinking water comes from ground water. Most is supplied through community water systems. But many families rely on private, household wells and use ground water as their source of fresh water.

Drinking water protection programs at the state and national levels play a critical role in ensuring high quality drinking water and in protecting the public's health.



Community Water

About 90% of people in the United States get their water from a [community water system](#). These public water systems are required to provide drinking water that meets standards established under the [Safe Drinking Water Act](#). EPA establishes drinking water standards for individual contaminants and groups of contaminants.

[More community water data and information.](#) ← 2

Well Water

About 15% of Americans have their own sources of drinking water, such as household wells, cisterns, and springs. These water supplies are not regulated by the EPA. So, unlike public community water systems serving many people, they do not have experts regularly checking the water's source and its quality before it is sent through pipes to the community.

[More well water data and information.](#)

Figure 35. The Water landing page

Step 3. (Figure 36) Here you have three options. In the blue box labeled Additional links, choose Arsenic. This will take you to information about arsenic, exposure, and prevention.

OR

Step 3a. At the bottom of the page choose *Arsenic in Community Water Systems*. This will lead you to information about this indicator, such as measure, descriptions, time period, and a scale of measures for arsenic and others.

OR


Step 3b. Choose Arsenic in Community Water Systems from the Search box. This will take you to the Query and Results page for arsenic.

Environments

Health Effects

Info by Location

Water




People drink and use water every day.

Community Water and Health

Community Water Monitoring in the US

Community Water Contaminants



Community Water


Tracking Community Water

Related Links

Search Community Water Data

Community Water

The majority of Americans are provided high-quality drinking water. About 90% of people in the United States get their water from a [community water system](#). The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets regulations for treating and monitoring drinking water delivered by community water systems. Water quality standards and monitoring requirements are in place for more than 90 contaminants. About 10% of people in the United States rely on smaller water supplies (mostly household wells) that are not regulated by EPA. Treatment and monitoring requirements for these small systems vary from state to state. Drinking water protection programs at the state and national levels play a critical role in ensuring high-quality drinking water and in protecting the public's health.



On this website you will find data and information about the levels of four contaminants in drinking water: nitrate, arsenic, disinfection by-products, and lead. These contaminants were selected for the Tracking Network because they occur more frequently in drinking water at levels that may be of public health significance. The contaminants also have a range of natural and man-made sources.

Community Water Indicators Available on the Tracking Network

Three types of indicators are used. The public water use measures provide information about the segment of the population to which the measures apply. The level of contaminant shows how well the water systems are producing high-quality water. The potential population exposure measures use estimates of the population served by water supplies to show the potential for exposure to contaminants in drinking water on a population basis. These measures together indicate the potential for public health impacts from contaminant levels of concern.

Click on the indicator to read more about it.

Arsenic in Community Water Systems

Disinfection Byproducts in Community Water Systems

Nitrates in Community Water Systems

Public Water Use

Search Community Water data:

Arsenic in Community Water Systems

GO

Additional Links

Arsenic

Disinfection By-products (DBP)

Nitrate

Figure 36. The options available from the *more community water data and information* link

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3.5.2 I want to learn more about older homes in my state that have lead based paint.

From the Home page:

Step 1. Go to the Info by Location section, select a state and click the search button. (Figure 37)



The screenshot shows a web interface titled "Info by Location" in a green header. Below the header is a map of the United States. Under the map, there is a "Select State:" label followed by a dropdown menu currently displaying "Georgia". To the right of the dropdown is a blue "SEARCH" button.

Figure 37. The Info by Location state selection area

Step 2. (Figure 38) Under *Select your Content Area* choose *Homes* as the Content Area, *Blood Lead Testing & Housing Age* as the Indicator, and *Number of homes built before 1950* as the Measure.

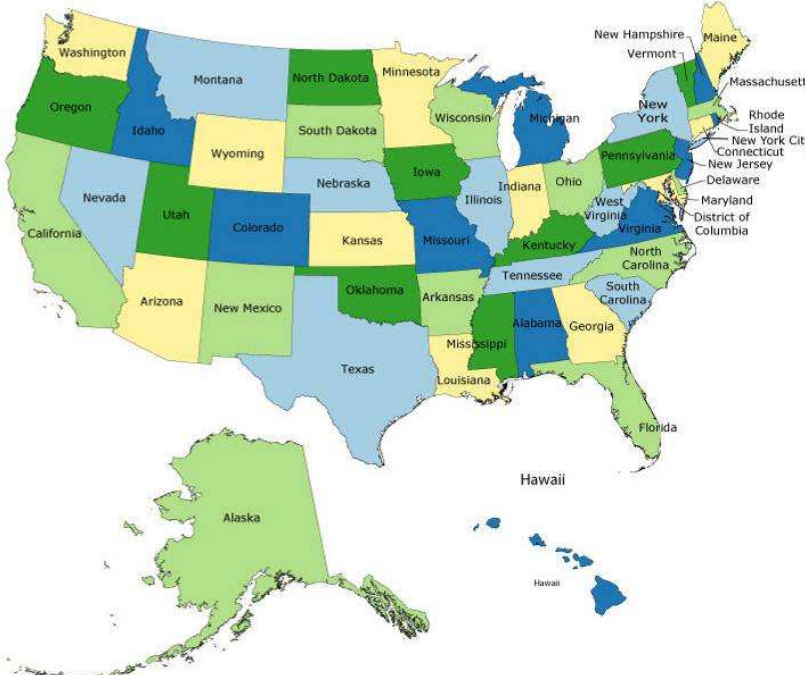
Click *Go*.

Note: If you do not find the content area, indicator, and measure you are looking for, data is not available for that chosen state.

EnvironmentsHealth EffectsInfo by Location

Query and Results

Step 1: Selected State is Georgia.



Step 2: Select your content area.

Content Area:

Homes

Select Indicator:

Blood Lead Testing and Housing Age

Select Measure:

Number of homes built before 1950

GO

Figure 38. The Info by Location geography and content area selection screen

3.5.3 What kind of cancer information and data are on the Network.

Step 1. From the home page, click the *Health Effects* Tab. (Figure 39)



Figure 39. The Health Effects tab

Step 2. From the Cancer subheading, click *Tracking Cancer*. This will take you to information about how cancer data is tracked and provided to the Network.



3.5.4 I want to see the Tracking Network Public Portal for New Mexico.

Step 1. From top toolbar, click *State & Local Tracking Portals*.



Step 2. Click on the image or link for New Mexico



3.5.5 I want to find asthma metadata.

Step 1. From the top toolbar click the *Indicators and Data* tab.



Step 2. In the *Search for Data* box—enter asthma as a keyword. (Figure 40)

Step 3. Click *GO* to view results.

Search for Data

Metadata are "data about data". Metadata describe the content, quality, and context of a dataset and provide links to additional information such as quality assurance documents and data dictionaries. The Tracking Network contains metadata records for datasets used to create the Tracking Indicators and for datasets maintained by national, state, and local environmental health partners.

Search Data-Indicators and Data:

Type in Keywords: ← 2

3 →

[Advanced Search](#)

Figure 40. The *Search Data-Indicators and Data* area

4. The Secure Portal



What is it?

The Tracking Network's secure portal is a Web-based system that houses the Tracking Networks nationally consistent data and measures. Through the secure portal you can view data available to the Tracking Network at a more detailed level. You can also extract the data and synthesize it in your own way, in addition to the way the Tracking Network has presented it to you through the Data Query and Results panel.

What is its purpose?

To support the implementation of the Tracking Network's nationally consistent data and measures and provide a secure, online resource center for grantees, partners, and other public health practitioners.

Who can use it?

It is intended for use by grantees, partners, public health practitioners, and researchers.

How secure is it?

To protect potentially private and confidential health information, the secure portal employs rigorous security measures.

The CDC Secure Data Network (SDN) protects content on the secure portal. The SDN, which protects sensitive CDC data, has security measures that include:

- rigorous identity proofing conducted by the CDC's registrar,

- electronic security certificates installed on accessing computers,
- role-based security measures implemented in the portal itself.

Secure users will be responsible for establishing access to SDN and installing any required security certificates. These measures are in accordance with appropriate guidance issued by the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

How can I register?

To become a registered user you must have an appropriate professional need to access the data and resources in the secure portal. (Figure 41)

Step 1 - To begin the process, fill out the Application for Access. If you are approved, you will receive an email that contains a web link to the SDN site and a password. This is your access to download the digital certificate.

Step 2 – The Digital Certificate and CDC Programs manual contain instructions for the SDN Enrollment Process, including instructions for installing the digital certificate.

Step 3 – Fill out the Data Request Form. Include a description of how the requested data will be used. The Tracking Program will forward this to the appropriate state or local Tracking Grantee who must approve your request.

Step 4 - After you are authorized to use the restricted data, you must sign a Data Use Agreement with the CDC, which will subject you to the terms of the relevant agreements between the CDC Tracking Program and data stewards or state and local Tracking Grantees.

Step 5 - When this process is complete, you can login to the Secure Portal.

Home	About Tracking Program	State & Local Tracking Portals	Indicators & Data	Secure Portal
Tracking A-Z Index				
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z				
Home > About the secure portal			GLOSSARY	CDC A-Z
			TRACKING A-Z	

[Home](#) > [About the secure portal](#)

Login ← 5

What is the Secure Portal?

Application for Access

Data Request Form
for Restricted-Access
Data ▲

3

The secure portal of the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network provides access to resources for environmental and public health practitioners and researchers. Its primary functions are to:

- support the implementation of the Tracking Network's nationally consistent data and measures
- provide a secure, online resource center for grantees, partners, and other public health practitioners.

To gain access to the secure portal, you must become a registered user. The registration process ensures that individuals requesting access have an appropriate professional need to utilize the data and resources within the secure portal. Users who are approved will receive a digital certificate to access the system.

Content on the secure portal will be protected through the extensive security procedures and technical mechanisms of the [CDC Secure Data Network \(SDN\)](#). The SDN protects all of CDC's sensitive data. The SDN security measures include:

- Rigorous identity proofing conducted by CDC's registrar
- Electronic security certificates installed on accessing computers
- Role-based security measures implemented in the portal itself.

Secure users will be responsible for establishing access to SDN and installing any required security certificates. These measures are in accordance with appropriate guidance issued by the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Becoming a Registered User and Obtaining Authorization to Access Restricted Data

To become a registered user of the Secure Portal, requestors must submit a completed application. As detailed in CDC's Technical Network Implementation Plan, registered users will include:

- CDC staff and contractors
- Tracking grantees
- other data partners
- other public health and environmental practitioners
- researchers.

The Tracking Program will review applications to ensure the stated objectives for accessing the secure portal are consistent with the types of data, tools, and services available on this site and with the purpose for which these Network assets were developed or obtained.

Approved requestors will receive a link to access the SDN site and a password. You must complete the enrollment process for the SDN. This involves applying for an SDN account, being assigned to the Tracking Program activities, and installing a digital certificate on your browser. If you already have a digital certificate for another CDC services, you will need to get assigned to the Tracking activity. Some data on the secure portal will have restricted access due to privacy constraints. Registration on the Secure Portal does not automatically allow registered users access to restricted datasets. To access these datasets, Secure Portal users must submit a data request form, which includes a description of how the requested data will be used. For data provided to the Tracking Network by state or local Tracking Grantees, the Tracking Program will forward the data requests to the appropriate state or local Tracking Grantees. State or local Tracking Grantees may approve, reject, or request additional information from the applicant as part of their review process. State or local Tracking Grantees will provide notification of final approval or rejection of the request to the Tracking Program. If a data request is rejected, the state or local Tracking Grantee will provide a reason for the rejection.

For data provided by national sources or sources other than state or local Tracking Grantees, requests for restricted data will be handled as specified by the data sharing agreement between the CDC Tracking Program and the data steward.

- 4 Users authorized to use restricted data will sign a data use agreement with CDC and will be subject to the terms within the relevant agreements between the CDC Tracking Program and data stewards or state and local Tracking Grantees. Users will be required to renew their access rights annually, unless otherwise specified during the data request process.

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5. Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can I go straight to the Data Query and Results page from the Home page?

No. You can only access the *Query* page through the content areas from the *Home* page or through the *Indicators & Data* tab on the top toolbar.

2. Is technical support available?

Yes. For technical questions about the Tracking Network call 1-877-923-TRACK or email us at trackingsupport@cdc.gov

3. How do I gain access to the secure portal?

The secure portal is currently under development. View Chapter 4 for detailed information regarding accessing the secure portal when it is available.

4. Who are grantees?

Grantees are state and local health departments that receive grants to help underwrite the collection and submission of data to the national Tracking Network.